

A Real-Life Approach to Intermediate Systems Acquisition

DSMC Distance Learning Course Developers Explore UAV Acquisition

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Course developers at the Defense Systems Management College (DSMC) stepped into the real-life world of the acquisition workforce with a recent trip to the Patuxent River Naval Air Station (NAS) at Patuxent River, Md. Examining the continuing development of Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) systems, they spent a full day talking to busy program management executives from the office of Program Executive Office, Cruise Missiles and Joint Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (PEO-CU).

Touring Aircraft Intermediate Maintenance Department, Patuxent River NAS, Md. From left: Frank Ferney, Director, Pioneer CFA, Naval Air Warfare Center Aircraft Division (NAWCAD); Julian Hart, CTI, ISAC-DL Design Team; John Bennett, DSMC, ISAC-DL Design Team; Larry Loudon, Tech. Rep., AAI/ESI; Kurt Rowley, ISAC-DL Design Team.



After touring the UAV support facilities, they walked away with insights to support the redesign of a popular Defense Acquisition University course. The January field trip to Patuxent River NAS was designed to help course developers learn about UAV systems and the true challenges facing today's defense acquisition teams. The goal for DSMC course developers is to present a realistic example of an acquisition program throughout the Intermediate Systems Acquisition Course – Distance Learning (ISAC-DL) to illustrate key acquisition concepts. The new ISAC-DL course uses a hypothetical UAV acquisition program as the instructional foundation, and the trip was designed to answer questions the course development team had about real-world UAV acquisition issues.

The new ISAC-DL course provides journeyman-level members of the defense acquisition workforce a comprehensive view of the Department of Defense (DoD) systems acquisition management process. Class material covers managerial, technical, and business aspects of systems acquisition. Upon completion of the course, students are better prepared to work on integrated product teams supporting acquisition programs.

The Pioneer UAV program at Patuxent River provided a first-hand look at issues that an ever-changing, modern acquisition



From left: Frank Ferney, Director, Pioneer CFA, NAWCAD; Andrea Garcia, Course Director, ISAC-DL Course, DSMC.

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Visit and discussions at Aircraft Intermediate Maintenance Department, Patuxent River NAS. From left: Frank Ferney, Director, Pioneer CFA, NAWCAD; Julian Hart, CTI, ISAC-DL Design Team; Wayne Glass, BRTRC, ISAC-DL Design Team; Bill Bahnmaier, DSMC, ISAC-DL Design Team; Larry Loudon, Tech. Rep., AAI/ESI.



Visit and discussions at PEO-CU, Patuxent River NAS. From left: Bill Bahnmaier, DSMC, ISAC-DL Design Team; Navy Cmdr. Randall Short, PEO-CU.



Visit to Aircraft Intermediate Maintenance Department, Patuxent River NAS. From left: Frank Ferney, Director, Pioneer CFA, NAWCAD; Bill Bahnmaier, DSMC, ISAC-DL Design Team; Julian Hart, CTI, ISAC-DL Design Team; John Bennett, DSMC, ISAC-DL Design Team.



Visit and discussions at PEO-CU, Patuxent River NAS. From left: Stephen Hogan, Deputy Program Manager, PMA-263, PEO-CU; John Bennett, DSMC, ISAC-DL Design Team.

tion workforce must address regarding current acquisition policies and procedures taught in the ISAC-DL course. "My motivation is to involve the students as much as we can," said Course Director Andrea Garcia. "We want exposure to real-world programs to make the course more relevant, interesting, and meaningful."

DSMC course developers spent hours asking questions of PEO-CU's Deputy, Greg Catrambone, UAV Deputy Program Manager, PMA-263, Steve Hogan, and

Navy Cmdr. Randall Short from PEO-CU before taking a tour of the Pioneer UAV

maintenance facility and a close look at each component of the Pioneer UAV system. For now, Pioneer remains the DoD's only maritized UAV to support worldwide contingency operations. To date,

Pioneer air vehicles have logged over 15,000 flight hours with the U.S. Navy, U.S. Marines, and the U.S. Army.

The Pioneer system provides real-time intelligence and reconnaissance capability to the field commander. The highly mobile system also offers high-quality video imagery for artillery or naval-gun-fire adjustment, battle-damage assessment, and reconnaissance over land or sea.

DSMC officials offered a long list of questions for Patuxent's UAV team, spending time on every aspect of the program, from Program Management Office staffing to logistics and cost estimating.

Members from DSMC began the day at Patuxent River by asking about leadership considerations and partnering with contractors. They learned that the UAV command offers several leadership programs, the most popular being the Senior Executive Development Management Program, a three- to five-year assignment that requires rotation, mentoring and high-caliber training at the

Darden Graduate School of Business Administration at the University of Virginia.

The UAV Command recently completed several new initiatives aimed at bringing contractors and the government closer together. In addition, the DSMC team learned how and when the UAV Command established its risk management methodology. The Command identified, analyzed, mitigated, and began tracking risks from the beginning, requiring each contractor to identify what they saw as the top 10 risks to the program.

On the much-talked-about topic of cycle time reduction, DSMC officials learned that the UAV Command helped speed up the acquisition process by talking to industry early in the game through such programs as Industry Day and frequent one-on-one sessions.

"They [Industry] essentially helped us develop our performance documentation," Hogan said. "This gave them [Industry] a heads up, as well, in preparing their proposals; and we reduced turnaround time of the proposals." Other

topics that surfaced centered on cost estimating methodology, testing and evaluation, as well as issues and difficulties in logistical support.

A trip to the UAV Aircraft Intermediate Maintenance Department located in a Patuxent aircraft hangar on the shores of the Chesapeake Bay followed the meeting at the UAV Program Executive Office. The DSMC team got a hands-on tour of the facility and the Pioneer system, from its sensitive, helmet-sized cameras to its lightweight wings. The 14-foot-long air vehicle is pusher-propeller driven, powered by a 26-horsepower, rear-mounted engine. DSMC officials had a chance to see its streamlined fuselage design and got a look at themselves on camera from the system's videosensors.

"It was great to have you here," Hogan said. "I hope we helped. You want students to learn realistically, but you don't want them going back to the workforce and saying, 'Why are we doing it this way?' That's why this meeting has been good for both of us."

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